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Take Action to Prevent the Murder and Torture of East Timorese Leader Xanana Gusmao

Xanana Gusmao, head of the National Council of Maubere Resistance, was captured by Indonesian troops in Dili on Friday, November 20, 1992. More than a dozen members of his family and the Araujo household (where he was apprehended), ranging in age from 13 to 74, have since been seized. There are reports of hundreds more East Timorese being rounded up.

The arrest of the 46-year-old leader of the unified East Timorese resistance has been claimed as a major victory by Indonesian military leaders, and has generated a worldwide outcry for the protection of his human rights. Xanana is currently being held under military detention center in Denpasar, Bali.

The Indonesian government may be deterred from torturing and killing him if they are continually reminded of international public and governmental attention. Please fax or call the following immediately.

- US Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger. Fax: 202-647-7120.
- President Suharto, Jakarta. Fax: 62/21-36-7782 or 62/21-36-0501
- UN Secretary-General Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Fax 212-963-4879, phone 212-963-5012.
- Your own Senators and Representatives, phone 202-224-3121.

The President of Portugal, leaders of France, Britain and Australia, Amnesty International, Asia Watch, and supporters of human rights from around the world have called on Indonesia to free Xanana and not to torture or murder him. The U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia made a mild statement, and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus has communicated their concern. Now it's up to you.

- Urge the Indonesian military and government to treat Xanana Gusmao and the others arrested in compliance with international conventions against torture and arbitrary execution. They could move him to a third country (Portugal has offered asylum) to help insure his safety. The Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies should be allowed to visit the prisoners. Indonesian law provides for the right to legal counsel of the defendant's choosing, and that must be honored.
- Now that Jakarta knows where Xanana is, he should be allowed to participate in the UN-sponsored talks on East Timor between Indonesia and Portugal that will resume on December 17 in New York. Indonesia could allow a popular plebiscite on East Timor's future without losing face.

- The situation in East Timor is extremely tense, with both the Timorese people and the Indonesian troops under stress. The army might try to eliminate anti-integration sentiment once and for all. In light of recently increasing repression and the new governor's statement that a thousand people should have been killed at the Santa Cruz massacre last year (instead of 273), international pressure may be the only way to prevent a further bloodbath. If the situation threatens to get out of control, the UN could intervene to keep the peace. If Xanana is tortured or killed, military repression and mass killings could get even worse.
- Xanana's capture is not the end of the East Timorese struggle for self-determination. The resistance is more than one person; it is supported by the overwhelming majority of the East Timorese people. By comparison, Nelson Mandela's imprisonment did not mean the end of the South African struggle, it meant the beginning of a campaign which culminated in his release and his ability to work openly for majority rule.

The following is from a statement issued in London on November 20 by TAPOL, the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign.

TAPOL CALLS FOR RELEASE OF EAST TIMOR RESISTANCE LEADER

The Indonesian army announced today that Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the East Timor resistance movement, was arrested in Dili early this morning and is now undergoing intense questioning.

The international community recognises Xanana Gusmao as the undisputed leader of East Timor's courageous resistance to its invasion and annexation by Indonesia in 1975. He has led the resistance movement with great courage, foresight and determination since 1980, having restored the movement's fortunes after the severe defeat it suffered in the late 1970s. Xanana has long been the symbol of resistance for both the older and younger generations of East Timorese.

The Indonesian army is known to treat their political prisoners with extreme brutality. If Xanana Gusmao is now in their hands, it is essential for him to be given full protection by the international community. The International Red Cross should be given immediate access.

TAPOL most vigorously protests against the arrest of the resistance leader and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

As leader of the national resistance, Xanana Gusmao has a crucial role to play in the talks about the future of East Timor which are now underway under UN auspices. The UN Secretary-General Dr Boutros-Ghali is understood to be planning to hold consultations with representatives of the East Timorese people as part of this process. Xanana Gusmao must not be prevented from taking part in these consultations.

Please send copies of any responses to the East Timor Action Network/US. Thank you. ETAN can provide background information on Xanana Gusmao, updates of the continuing situation, and other materials and resources on the struggle for East Timorese self-determination.

November 29, 1992